

‘The Leprous Queen’—A Ballad from Lesbos

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In memoriam Alexander Walton

An apparently unpublished ballad originating from the village of Antissa in Lesbos tells the story of a foreign queen who was afflicted with leprosy and subsequently cured by bathing in a stream which possessed healing properties. Alexander Walton related the discovery as follows:¹

‘During a tour that I made of Lesbos during the winter of 1958–9, I was repeatedly told: “When you get to Antissa, you will hear about the Queen there.” I was puzzled by this repeated promise—or warning—and always asked how there could have been a queen there; for surely neither the Byzantine Empire nor the Turkish conquerors would have tolerated a local ruler who gave herself so high-sounding a name. However, nobody, whether peasant or educated, was able to give me any enlightenment on this point: not even a poet, said to be of world renown, a native of Lesbos who claimed to be a great expert on its ancient history and traditions; he had spent all his youth in the island, and had only gone on to Athens when his poetic reputation was already established; now he had returned because his inspiration had run dry, and he hoped to be able to renew it by drinking once more at the fountain-head. But he, like

1. The story, music, and surviving fragments of the song were collected by the late Alexander Walton. I should like to thank Dr. Margaret Alexiou for much helpful advice on problems of methodology.

everyone else, was able only to tell me: "You'll find out when you get there."

But when I got there, it seemed there was only one person who could tell me: the village school-master. I now wonder whether there weren't perhaps other more ancient inhabitants of the village who might have remembered more of it; and I now deeply regret not having spent several days going round from house to house, enquiring whether anyone could recall even small scraps of the original. Indeed, if there had been anyone left who was old enough to be completely illiterate, he might even have remembered the whole thing, or most of it; for it is certainly the twentieth-century spread of literacy in Greece which has wiped out the memory of such ballads, along with much other folk-art.

Anyway, the school-master claimed to know all there was to know about this particular ballad, and I was lazy enough to believe him. He certainly enjoyed the great advantage of being able to write down what he remembered, and also the tune. This, as he gave it to me, had no bar lines and I think one note of the tune as given me must have been wrongly written as a minim where there should be a crotchet, for that amendment makes it possible to see it in strict five-time, while the minim is irreconcilable with any regular rhythm.

The mystery of how there came to be a queen in Lesbos was quickly cleared up by the first and most basic part of the story—that she was not a Queen *of* Lesbos, nor of any part of it, but of some distant land from which she had been exiled because she suffered from leprosy. She settled at Antissa, and here she dwelt in a crystal castle—though whether she herself constructed this building, or found it ready-made and waiting for her to occupy, the story does not seem to tell us.

One day, while wandering near her castle, she saw a herd of pigs that also suffered from leprosy. These she was lucky enough to see dive into a pool or stream, and to come out cured. She presumably found it no very difficult task to guess that she might benefit no less from a similar immersion. So she too dived in, and came out in her full pristine health.

This Queen had the habit of playing the lyre; and sailors were often attracted by her music, and would draw their ships in by the shore so as to hear more clearly; they sometimes

even landed in order to make her acquaintance. The story did not seem very clear on whether the Queen deliberately played her lyre without any other motive than that of attracting sailors; nor on whether she had acquired this habit before her leprosy was cured, in which case it must have had some rather unfortunate results, perhaps not entirely unreminiscent of Circe's musical attractions on her island.

One of the bands of sailors that were attracted to land seems to have been particularly well-equipped, for one of their number was able to furnish himself with armour, and also to mount a horse for the purpose of going hunting. (Of course, these accoutrements may have been hired or borrowed after his landing on the island, but if so the story as I was told it omits this detail.) The Queen, still handling her lyre, but now apparently outside the castle, begged him to dismount and come and talk to her; and just at this moment one of the strings of the lyre broke, cutting her finger badly enough to make it bleed with some profusion. She begged the huntsman for his handkerchief so that she might bind up her wounded finger; and when he produced a handkerchief as requested, she instantly recognized it as one embroidered by herself. This led to the realization that the huntsman was none other than her brother. She was thus able to return happily with him to the kingdom from which she had been banished.

There seem to be several odd discrepancies in the story. How was it that the Queen had succeeded to the throne in spite of having a brother? Under the Salic law of France and a lot of other kingdoms in Europe, no woman could ever become a sovereign even if she had no brother, or even transmit the inheritance of a monarchy to her male children, while the alternative laws of other countries would still not allow her primacy over a brother. Of course, she may have been a Queen only in the sense of having been married to a king; but in that case it seems odd that the tale tells us nothing of what has become of her husband.

The brother must have been a great deal younger than herself, and only a baby when she left, or she would have recognized him rather than the handkerchief.

Then, why did she not return to her kingdom as soon as her leprosy was cured? Perhaps we are asked to suppose that

communications from Lesbos were then so imperfect that it was impossible for her to find a regular ship bound in the right direction. But as she was continually luring in sailors with her lyre, one would have thought that one of them could have been induced to take her at least some distance nearer home. Of course, the dangers and infrequencies of shipping seem to have been one of the commonplaces of stories of ancient Greece, and thus also of Latin stories founded on Greek originals, and hence of such English instances as *The Comedy of Errors*. But shipping here in Lesbos seems to have been not so much dangerous and infrequent as non-existent.

However, to me the most striking thing about this story is the central part played in it by the lyre, and its being remembered only in Antissa, where it was also said to have occurred. For the only contribution that Lesbos makes to Greek mythology (so far as I know) was that the head and lyre of Orpheus, after he was torn to pieces by the Maenads, were borne down the river Hebrus and across the sea to Antissa. Hence, perhaps, suggests Professor Denys Page, the inspiration of Alcaeus's Hymn to the river Hebrus; and he goes on: "No Lesbian needed any such motive [as a journey to Thrace] for celebrating the river Hebrus; and especially, no Lesbian poet. For the head of Orpheus was buried at Antissa, his lyre was preserved in a temple of Apollo, and the gift of song in Lesbos was deemed to be inspired by these sacred relics:

ἐκ κείνου μολπαίτε καὶ ἱμερτὴ κιθαριστὺς
νῆσον ἔχει, πασέων δ' ἐστὶν αἰδοτάτη."²

Antissa is now a village with a population of less than two thousand.³ Few people outside Lesbos have heard of it, except

2. D. Page, *Sappho and Alcaeus* (Oxford, 1955), p. 288.

3. 1,762 according to the 1971 census figure published by the National Statistical Service of Greece (information supplied by Mr. N. Baltas). It should be noted that the ancient site of Antissa is now called Ovriokastro, while the present-day village of Antissa lies now some two or three miles inland (see below). The census gives no separate figure for Ovriokastro. The name Ovriokastro may derive from τὸ κάστρο τῆς Ὠριᾶς, thus connecting the place with the well-known folk-song and the related legend of a princess in a castle. Against such a connection see N. G. Politis, *Μελέται περὶ τοῦ βίου καὶ τῆς γλώσσης τοῦ ἑλληνικοῦ λαοῦ—Παραδόσεις*, II (Athens, 1904), p. 720.

students of Greek mythology, and they only in connection with the head and lyre of Orpheus. Surely it cannot be coincidence that a folk-ballad in which a lyre plays so essential a part should be centred in Antissa?’

The fragments of the ballad⁴ which the school-master was able to recall and the tune are as follows:

*Μιά λυγερή τραγούδησε σὲ κρυσταλλένιο πύργο,
κι ὅσα καράβια τ' ἄκουσαν ὅλα λιμνοῦν κι ἀράζουν·
μὰ μιὰ φρεγάτα Φράγκισσα ὄρτοσα ὅλο πάντα στέκει
κι ὁ καπετάνιος φώναζε· ‘Σταθῆτε, λεβεντάδες,
5 ν' ἀκούσωμε τὴ λυγερή, σὰν τί τραγοῦδι λέγει.’*

*Νά κυνηγὸς καὶ ἔρχεται, μαζί κι ὁ κυνηγάρης·
‘Καλὴ σου μέρα, λυγερή!’ ‘Καλῶς τὸ κυνηγάρη!
Δέσε τὸ σκυλαράκι σου σὲ λυγαριᾶς κλωνάρι,
ἀκούμπησε καὶ τ' ἄρματα σὲ πέτρα, σὲ λιθάρι.
10 Δῶσ' μου τὸ μαντιλάκι σου, τ' ὀμορφοκεντημένο,
νὰ δέσω τὸ χεράκι μου, ποῦ εἶναι ματωμένο,
καὶ ἄς μὲ λέγουνε λεπρή—σ' ἐσένα δὲν κολλάει.’*



*Μιὰ λυ-γε-ρή τρα-γού-δη - σε σὲ κρυ-στα - λλέ - νιο
κι ὅ-σα κα-ρά-βια τ' ἄ-κου-σαν ὅ - λα λι - μνοῦν κι ἄ-
πύ - ργο, κι ὅ-σα κα-ρά - κα - ρά-βια τ' ἄ-κου-σαν
ρά - ζουν μὰ μιὰ φρε-γά - φρε- γά-τα Φρά-γκι-σσα κτλ.*

4. I refer to 'the ballad' for the sake of convenience. In all probability we are dealing with a long narrative work in verse of popular inspiration, surviving in a fragmentary form (see below, note 23, for a similar case), rather than a verse romance stemming from the pen of a more educated poet (cf. the romance of 'Fiorentino and Dolcetta' postulated by G. Morgan from surviving prose tales incorporating verse fragments: 'Cretan Poetry, Sources and Inspiration', *Κρητικά Χρονικά*, XIV (1960), 420-5) or a prose tale of folk origin.

5. This note was given as a minim by the school-master, which, however, upsets the basic quintuple rhythm of the tune.

Certain general observations may be made on the form of these fragments. First, there is no trace of Lesbian dialect, which is certainly to be accounted for by the intervention of the educated school-master, who must have ‘purified’ the language of dialectal elements. Secondly, the melody covers one and a half verses, then the last hemistich is repeated while the melody begins again from the beginning. This strophic system is of considerable antiquity,⁶ but unfortunately it does not serve as a guarantee for the antiquity of the song since the same system continued to be used for the composition of new songs over a long period. Thirdly, the melody is of a type commonly used for narrative songs; it is built on two ‘chromatic’ tetrachords, characterized by the interval of an augmented second between the second and third notes (though the second note of the first tetrachord—E flat—does not actually occur).⁷ Fourthly, while the first extract is completely without rhyme, there are indications of a rudimentary rhyme-form in lines 6 to 11. This disparity may be explained by the accretion of various common motifs to the kernel of the story, which will now be discussed.

The first fragment, consisting of five lines, is a variation of a formula frequently used to introduce a ballad, and especially the *Τραγούδι τῆς ἀπαρνημένης*, e.g.,

*Μιά κόρη πικροτραγουδάει ἀπὸ κρουσταλλένιον πύργο,
κι ἀγέρας πῆρε τῇ φωνῇ, κι ὁ ἄνεμος τὸ τραγούδι,
καὶ σέρνει το καὶ πάει το ἀνάμεσα πελάγου.
Κι ὅσα καράβια τ' ἄκουσαν, δλ' ἄραξαν καὶ δένουν,
κ' ἓνα καράβι τῆς φιλιᾶς, φρεγάδα τῆς ἀγάπης,
οὐδὲ μαζώνει τὰ πανιά, οὔτε κι ὁμπρὸς τραβάει.
Κι ὁ καπετάνιος φώναξεν ὀπίσω ἀπὸ τὴν πρύμνη·*

6. It goes back at least to the seventeenth century, when it is found in a manuscript containing folk songs with musical notation; see S. Baud-Bovy, *La chanson populaire grecque du Dodécanèse, I: Les textes* (Paris, 1936), pp. 372, 376; *idem*, ‘Sur le strophe de la chanson “cleftique”’, *L’Annuaire de l’Institut de Philologie et d’Histoire Orientales et Slaves*, X (1950), 53–78, especially p. 58; G. Morgan, *loc. cit.*, 49ff. (where the term ‘link-song’ is used).

7. In the Academy of Athens collection, *Ἑλληνικά δημοτικά τραγούδια*, III (*Μουσική Ἐκλογή*) (Athens, 1968), the melodies which most resemble ours are those on pp. 216–17 and 329–30. It is perhaps not without significance that the first of these is sung to a song entitled *Συνάντησις ἐρωτευμένων*. I am grateful to Miss Lucy Durán for assisting me with these observations on the tune.

‘Αφῆστε, ναῦτες, τὰ πανιά, ναύκληρε, τὸ τιμόνι,
ν’ ἀκούσουμε τοῦ κορασιοῦ, πῶς γλυκοτραγουδάει,
τὸ τί τραγούδι τραγουδάει, τὸ τί σκοπὸ τὸ σέρνει.’⁸

The second fragment of our song employs the common motif of the huntsman and the maiden, e.g.

... βλέπω μιὰ κόρ’ ἀπὸ πλυνε, σὲ κρυσταλλένια βρύση.
‘Καλὴ μερὰ σου, λυγερή!’ ‘Καλῶς τὸν κυνηγάρη!
Γιὰ δέσε τὰ σκυλάκια σου σὲ λεμονιάς κλωνάρι.’
‘Δεμένα εἶν’ τὰ σκυλάκια, λαγούς, περδίκες πιάνουν,
μὰ σὰν κ’ ἐσένα, λυγερή, ποτὲ δὲν σὲ δαγκάνουν.’
Κι ὁ κυνηγὸς τὴν ἔριψε μαντίλι νὰ τοῦ πλύνη,
κ’ ἐκεῖν’ ἀπὸ τὸ φόβο της ὀπίσω τοῦ τὸ δίνει. . . .’⁹

Usually in the songs called *ὁ κυνηγὸς κ’ ἡ κόρη*, as in the one just quoted, the huntsman comes across a girl washing clothes in a stream and by way of introduction asks her to wash his handkerchief; she refuses because it is late and so he invites her to come home with him. In another version the girl has been imprisoned in a tower by her parents because of her illicit love affairs and is freed by a passing huntsman, whom she marries.¹⁰

8. N. G. Politis, *Ἐκλογαὶ ἀπὸ τὰ τραγούδια τοῦ ἑλληνικοῦ λαοῦ* (Athens, 1914), p. 164, No. 129A. For other variants of the same motif see: A. Alexandris, *Εὐβοϊκὰ τραγούδια καὶ μοιρολόγια, Λαογραφία*, VI (1917), 567, No. 18; I. Petsis, *Συλλογὴ ἀνεκδότων δημοτικῶν ἀσμάτων Μακεδονίας—Χαλκιδικῆς—Θράκης* (1931), p. 84, No. 127; G. Ioannou, *Τὸ δημοτικὸ τραγούδι—Παραλγὲς* (Athens, 1970), pp. 119–20 Γ’, etc. In a song from Epirus the motif is used to introduce a curse on *ζενιτιά*: A. Yiángas, *Ἡπειρωτικὰ δημοτικὰ τραγούδια 1000–1958* (Athens, 1959), p. 411, No. 638.

9. Petsis, *op. cit.*, p. 36, No. 43 (cf. also p. 37, No. 44). Other variants may be found in: G. Martzoukos, *Κερκυραϊκὰ δημοτικὰ τραγούδια* (Athens 1959), pp. 61ff., No. 17; M. I. Salvanos, *Τραγούδια, μοιρολόγια καὶ λαζαρικά Ἀργυράδων Κερκύρας, Λαογραφία*, IX (1926), 180, No. 51; Yiángas, *op. cit.*, pp. 281f., No. 394; M. Michailidis Nouaros, *Δημοτικὰ τραγούδια Καρπάθου* (Athens, 1928), pp. 160–1, Nos. 18a, 18b; Lüdeke, *Ἐπετηρίς της Ἑταιρείας Κρητικῶν Σπουδῶν*, I (1938), 505, No. I; A. Kriaris, *Κρητικὰ δημοτικὰ τραγούδια*, 3rd ed. (Athens, 1969), pp. 307, 325–6. An Epirot song known as *Ἡ ἐρωτευμένη κι ὁ ξένος* uses the same motif of washing a handkerchief in a rather different way: here the handkerchief seems to symbolize the exile’s links with his homeland; see Yiángas, *op. cit.*, p. 416, Nos. 648–9, and cf. also No. 651.

10. *Ἡ ἐξόριστη κι ὁ κυνηγός*. See D. Petropoulos, *Ἑλληνικὰ δημοτικὰ τραγούδια*, I (Athens, 1958), p. 119.

The handkerchief in the first of these two types merely serves as a pretext for the huntsman to address the girl. In the present ballad, however, it is the means by which the girl recognizes the huntsman as her long-lost brother. This brings us to a third common motif of the folk-songs: the mutual recognition of a brother and sister. The recognition theme is an extremely old one in the folk-songs,¹¹ but here it appears to be no more than a later accretion to the central story. The same is true of the other common elements which have already been mentioned: the girl's plaintive singing which attracts sailors to listen to her story and the meeting of the huntsman and the girl.

What distinguishes this song and makes it of particular interest is the mention of leprosy. Lepers are, of course, not unknown to Greek folklore: there is, for instance, a Cypriot tradition of a leper prince who was cured by drinking a mixture of snake-venom and goat's milk with which he thought to poison himself.¹² The tale of Fiorentino and Dolcetta, which has as its starting-point the quest for a cure for the leprosy of Dolcetta's father, is widespread throughout the Greek mainland and islands.¹³ In Chios there are hot springs whose water is supposed to be an effective cure for the disease.¹⁴

The Crusades contributed significantly to the spread of leprosy in Europe; it reached a peak in the fifteenth century and since then it has tended to recede.¹⁵ This leads us to ask whether there can be any historical basis for the present song. Was there in fact a queen who was exiled to a remote part of Lesbos, when she was afflicted with leprosy, and later cured in some miraculous way? There seems to be no historical record of a queen whose situation corresponds exactly to that of the woman in our song. There is, however, mention of a woman afflicted with leprosy, who was the wife of one of the Gattilusi rulers of

11. See Petropoulos, *op. cit.*, p. 133 and the relevant bibliography there given.

12. *Τὸ λωβιασμένο βασιλόπουλο*: N. G. Politis, *Παραδόσεις*, II, p. 48, No. 83. It may be possible to see a connection between this story and the case of King Baldwin IV of Jerusalem.

13. See N. G. Politis, *Λαογραφία* II (1910), 146–8, R. M. Dawkins, *Modern Greek Folktales* (Oxford, 1953), pp. 332–3, G. Morgan, *loc. cit.*, pp. 420–5.

14. See P. Argenti and H. Rose, *The Folk-lore of Chios*, I (Cambridge, 1949), p. 421.

15. *Μεγάλη Ἑλληνική Ἐγκυκλοπαιδεία*, *σ.υ. λέπρα*.

Lesbos; of him William Miller wrote: 'Domenico's love for his wife was proverbial, and it is narrated of him that he could never bear to be out of her sight and even shared her bed when she was afflicted with leprosy.'¹⁶ The lady in question, whose name was Maria, was a member of the Giustiniani family, which ruled Chios, the daughter of Paride Giustiniani Longo.¹⁷

Further testimony of the couple's great love for one another is provided by the story of Domenico's assassination by his brother Nicolò in 1458. It is related that Maria clung faithfully to her husband until he was led away to his death.¹⁸ Miller goes on to remark that Maria's subsequent fate is unknown, but 'she has given her name to the only modern poem, based upon the medieval history of Sappho's island'. He is referring to a poem entitled *Μαρία Γατελούζη* by a certain Ioannis Pavlidis.¹⁹ But

16. W. Miller, 'The Gattilusj of Lesbos (1355–1462)', *BZ*, XXII (1913), 430. Miller's sources for the information about Maria are: *Exempla Baptistae Campofulgosi, Dictorum factorumque memorabilium*, Liber III (Basle, 1551), pp. 826–7, and Ag. Giustiniani, *Annali della Repubblica di Genova*, II (1854), p. 384. These accounts perhaps deserve to be quoted in full. Campofulgosi: 'Singulari etiam memoria dignus est amor, quem Dominicus Catalusius, qui Lesbi rerum potiebatur, erga uxorem ostendit. Quae cum in lepram incidisset, vir minime veritus a contagione infici posse, aut aspectus horrore averti (etenim illuvies magis quam vivum corpus videri poterat) neque tetro odore quem ulcera mittebant, nunquam aut mensa aut lecto communi eam prohibuit. Coniugalibus enim charitas apud eum contagionis timorem tetrumque conspectum odoremque in securitatem ac voluptatem verterat, quod eam iuxta Dei verbum eandem carnem secum esse arbitrabatur.' Giustiniani (entered under the year 1454): 'E accadde per questi tempi un memorabil segno di benevolenza fra due consorti. Paris Giustiniano era dei primi Signori, ossia come si dice dei primi Maonesi di Scio dotato di grandezza d'animo e di molte ricchezze e maritò Maria una delle sue figliuole al Signore dell'Isola di Metelino Dominico Gatilusio Genovese, e la mandò al marito con una galera che fece fabbricare e armare di nuovo. E la venusta matrona in processo di tempo contrasse il morbo lazzareno ossia il morbo leproso. E nondimeno il marito continuò sempre la mensa e il letto con la diletta moglie, la quale essendo reciproca nell'amore non l'abbandanò quando fu con le arme crudelmente assaltato dai suoi inimici, i quali con suprema violenza gliel levarono delle brazze, e menonlo via e gli detteno da morte. Essempio certo raro e degno di commemorazione.'

17. See C. Hopf, *Chroniques gréco-romanes inédites ou peu connues* (Berlin, 1873), p. 519.

18. See W. Miller, art. cit., pp. 435–6, and the account of Giustiniani quoted in note 16 above.

19. I. Pavlidis, *Ἡ Ἑλλάς τὴν βάρβριτον* (Leipzig, 1883), pp. 6–21.

in all probability this poem refers, not to our Maria, but to the sister of Domenico Gattilusi who married Alexander, emperor of Trebizond, and was taken into the harem of Mehmet II after the fall of Trebizond in 1461.²⁰ In the Pavlidis poem her husband is called Xanthos, and Maria says that her *father* was strangled by her brothers and her mother was carried off by disease. Pavlidis seems to have got his relationships mixed up; at any rate Miller is mistaken in referring this poem to the wife of Domenico Gattilusi.

There is a castle at Antissa built by the Genoese near the ancient acropolis.²¹ It is conceivable that Maria was forced to live in this remote place far from the city of Mytilene while she was suffering from leprosy. If 'Domenico's love for his wife was proverbial', it need not surprise us that a story about this woman should have made such an impression on the native population²² that it survived in the form of a popular ballad for more than 500 years.²³ It must be admitted, however, that the account of the ballad which we possess makes no mention of her husband, but such a preoccupation with striking details at the expense of historical fact is by no means untypical of folk poetry. This very lack of concern for historical detail, despite the fact that the only testimony comes from an educated person, together with the fragmentary nature of the ballad, argues strongly in favour of its authenticity. A deliberate concoction,

20. W. Miller, *Trebizond* (London, 1926), pp. 105–6.

21. Winifred Lamb, 'Antissa', *Annual of the British School at Athens*, XXX (1930–1), 166; see also the map *ibid.*, XXXI (1931–2), pl. 17. Further: R. Koldewey, *Die antiken Baureste der Insel Lesbos* (Berlin, 1890), pp. 19–21.

22. There is evidence for some attempt on the part of the Gattilusi to integrate themselves with the native population: 'Questa famiglia di astuti diplomatici, di principi splendidi e raffinati, governa il suo piccolo stato coi metodi caratteristici del nostro Rinascimento, che considera la politica un'opera d'arte; ma unisce questi metodi al cerimoniale greco. I Gattilusi sono vassalli di Bisanzio, imparentati anche con la casa imperiale di Trebisonda, e dopo le prime generazioni adottano nomi greci (Palamede, Dorino) come i D'Oria in Sardegna e in Persia. Ma, come sempre, l'acclimatazione è soltanto parziale: in fondo all'animo si mantengono Genovesi . . .' (R. S. Lopez, *Storia delle colonie genovesi nel Mediterraneo* [Bologna, 1938], p. 365).

23. A similar instance of an old ballad surviving in part with a prose summary of the narrative of the whole is mentioned by G. Morgan, *op. cit.*, p. 53. In that case it was an Akritic song, from which only twenty lines could be remembered.

based on a written source, would certainly have shown more concern for convincing historical detail.

If a plausible case can be made for an incident in the history of Lesbos giving rise to a romanticized narrative folk-song, a similar story associated with the foundation of the Monastery of St. John Chrysostom at Koutsovendi in Cyprus is more obviously fictional. Towards the end of the period of Arab invasions of Cyprus three well-fortified castles were built in the Pentadaktylos range, of which the most inaccessible was Buffavento.²⁴ Here, according to tradition, lived a noble lady who suffered from some incurable skin disease, probably leprosy. Her only company and consolation was her small puppy. Naturally the puppy had also contracted the disease, but suddenly began to be cured. Curious to find the explanation for this sudden cure, the lady ordered one of her servants to follow the dog one day when it went out of the castle, as was its wont. The puppy made straight for a spring, which trickled from the base of a huge rock and formed a small pool; here it bathed, repeatedly diving in and emerging with obvious enjoyment. Suspecting that the spring water may have been responsible for the puppy's cure, the lady had some of it brought to the castle and bathed herself in it; within a few days she was completely free of leprosy. She planned then to return to the company of her family and friends, but that night in a dream St. John Chrysostom appeared to her and told her to build a church beside the healing spring and spend the rest of her life in that place. So the noble lady founded the Monastery of St. Chrysostom, where it still exists, a short distance to the south of the castle of Buffavento.²⁵

The similarities between this account and the Lesbian ballad are immediately striking: a noble lady, afflicted with leprosy, forced to live segregated from family and friends, is restored to health after observing the cure of some animal by immersion in a healing spring. These are the bare bones of the two narratives, and they coincide with a widespread folk-lore motif.²⁶ This

24. G. Hill, *A History of Cyprus*, I (Cambridge, 1940), pp. 271–2.

25. N. Kliridis, *Μοναστήρια στην Κύπρο. Θρύλοι και Παραδόσεις* (Nicosia, 1952), pp. 62–4.

26. S. Thompson, *Motif-index of Folk-literature*, 6 vols. (Bloomington, Ind., 1932–6), B512, 'Medicine shown by animal'. See also F. W. Hasluck,

fairy-tale account of a miraculous cure revealed by the agency of an animal seems to have become attached to various historical personages or geographical locations at different times. In the case of the Cypriot tradition the explanation seems to lie in the need for a monastery to boast some miraculous legend regarding its foundation—examples are numerous.²⁷

Similarly the fairy-tale adopted a special local significance at Antissa where a foreign noblewoman who suffered from leprosy lived and may have been cured by a therapeutic spring—though history does not record that. Thus the ballad would derive from an initial identification of a historical person with the heroine of a fictional tale which already had certain striking common features, and the subsequent accretion of other motifs, as described above.

One further question must be discussed: the attractive possibility of a link between this song and the ancient legend

Christianity and Islam under the Sultans, II (Oxford, 1929), p. 686, where among other examples is mentioned that of an anonymous Byzantine princess at Prousa.

27. The foundation-legend also seems to have become connected with the mythical *Phyaiva*, who is associated with almost every ruin, and many natural features besides (woods, caves, springs), of Cyprus. According to S. Menardos, '*H Phyaiva*, *DIEE*, VI (1901), 117–48, this may be a distant folk memory of the worship of Aphrodite in antiquity. He reports (p. 121) a tradition that the Monastery of St. Chrysostom was founded by the *Phyaiva*, who also planted the cypresses which surround it, and that this queen was popularly identified with a certain Maria Molino depicted in an icon in the church. The lady in the foundation-legend is in Greek *ἀρχόντισσα*, though the nearby castle of Buffavento is known still, as so many other ruins in Cyprus, as *τὰ σπείτια τῆς Φηγαίνας* (Kliridis, op. cit., p. 62; cf. Hill, op. cit., I, pp. 271–2. Hill also mentions another version of the same legend, according to which Buffavento Castle was built by a noble Cypriot lady, the same who founded the church of St. Chrysostom, who took refuge there from the Templars; op. cit., II, p. 36). As to the true origin and date of the foundation of the monastery, nothing appears to be known beyond the fact that it already existed in 1152 when Neophytos began his monastic career there. For yet another account of the legend, and a similar one from a nearby village, see J. Hackett, *A History of the Orthodox Church of Cyprus* (London, 1901—reprinted New York, 1972), pp. 356f. Hackett adds the detail that the healing fountain still existed in his day within the precincts of the monastery and retained its medicinal properties. The earliest mention of this fountain-legend seems to be dated 1683, when van Bruyn visited the monastery; his account is quoted by R. Gunnis, *Historic Cyprus*, 2nd ed. (London, 1947), pp. 294f.

which records that Orpheus' lyre was preserved in the temple at Antissa. On the face of it, it seems highly improbable that the knowledge of this tradition could have survived in the popular memory for over two millennia, even though it is well known that the modern Greek folk-songs, particularly those known as *παραλογές*, preserve any elements of ancient Greek mythology.²⁸ It is certainly a striking coincidence that a song about a woman who played a lyre²⁹ should be recorded in exactly the same spot where Orpheus' lyre was supposed to have been preserved, but the connection between that and the present song is otherwise flimsy. The recognition theme, which is dependent on the broken lyre-string, is, as has already been noted, secondary to the main theme of the ballad, which is the semi-miraculous cure for the girl's leprosy. Such a connection with ancient mythology, if any exists, is more likely in the present case to result from later modification by an educated person, such as the school-master from whom the song was taken down, than from the incorporation of ancient material in a later narrative.

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28. S. Paraskevaidis, *Ἐπιβιώσεις τοῦ ἀρχαίου ἐλληνικοῦ βίου ἐν Λέσβῳ* (Mytilene, 1956), p. 41, mentions a people known as *Γιουρούκοι*, who are supposed to have continued to practise ancient Greek religion on the island until 1462, when they were forcibly converted to Islam (I am indebted to Miss Eftychia Psarelli for referring me to this book and others about Lesbos). On the other hand another Mytilenean writer refers to *Γιουρούκηδες* as *νομάδες* *στὰ χρόνια τῆς Τουρκοκρατίας, καὶ μωαμεθανοὶ στὸ θρήσκευμα* (K. Makistos [Papacharalampous], *Ἡ Σελλάδα Ἀγίας Παρασκευῆς Λέσβου* [Athens, 1970], p. 202). *Yürük* is the Turkish word for 'nomads' and is used to designate a large number of different tribes. Most of them speak Turkish dialects and apparently practise some heretical form of Mohammedanism. (For an authoritative account see F. W. Hasluck, *op. cit.*, I, pp. 126–37; further X. de Planhol, *De la plaine pamphylienne aux lacs pisidiens. Nomadisme et vie paysanne* [Paris, 1958], *passim*, and *idem*, *Les fondements géographiques de l'histoire de l'Islam* [Paris, 1968], p. 227 for the origin of the term *yürük*; I owe these references to Dr. A. A. M. Bryer.) There seems to be nothing to link the *Yürük* with the ancient Greeks, though it is a fairly frequent assertion of modern Greek writers.

29. The *λύρα*, which has no connection with the ancient instrument of the same name, is commonly in use to accompany the folk songs; see S. Baud-Bovy, *Chansons du Dodécanèse*, I (Athens, 1935), p. xxii, and S. Michaelidis, *The Neohellenic Folk-Music* (Limassol, 1948), p. 27.